

## DEVIATIONS IN LANGUAGE OF LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

The art of literature is not reducible to the words in the page; they are there because of the craft of writing. As an art, literature is the organization of words to give pleasure; through them it elevates and transforms experience; through them it functions in society as a continuing symbolic criticism of values. Literature is a form of human expression. But not everything expressed in words- even when organized and written down- is counted as literature.

**KEYWORDS:** Lexical, Semantic, Phonological, Graphological, Deviations, Artifice

### INTRODUCTION

Artistic merit makes writing a literary work. In some literatures, the language employed is quite different from that spoken or used in ordinary writing. This marks off the reading of literature as a special experience. The Elizabethans did not talk like Shakespeare nor 18<sup>th</sup> century people in the stately prose of Samuel Johnson or Edward Gibbon (the so-called Augustan plain style in literature became popular in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and flourished throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>, but it was really a special form of rhetoric with antecedent models in Greek and Latin). The first person to write major works of literature in the ordinary English language of the educated man was Daniel Defoe. His work Robinson Crusoe (1719) is much more contemporary in tone than the elaborate prose of 19<sup>th</sup> Century writers. Defoe's language is not, in fact, so very simple: simplicity is itself one form of artifice.<sup>1</sup> Language is used to create imaginary world of a literature, and it is used to express ideas, emotions etc. Language can be used directly or indirectly to the readers. Language is certainly the most important aspect of literature. Some of the language features and deviations are discussed here.

### LEXICAL / SEMANTIC AND GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

#### Various Lexical / Semantic Meanings

Meaning relations that hold between morphemes and lexical items in a sentence determine sentence meaning. When used in sentences, potentially ambiguous words like *run* are often made unambiguous by the other words with which they are combined and related. Thus, when *run* appears with a directional expression as in "He *ran* into the field", it means unambiguously "move fast", while *run* in "He *ran* the boat race" means unambiguously "organize" because boats move on water, while running cannot take place on water. What disambiguates *run* in "He *ran* the boat race" is not linguistic knowledge, but knowledge of the world (that boats have no legs; that it is physically impossible to run on water, and so on). It is true that, especially in questions of disambiguation, the line between knowledge of the world and knowledge of language is thin at certain points. Nevertheless, it is necessary for the grammar to specify in some way that *run* involves movement on land or else we could not account for the oddness of "He *ran* on land" (odd because land is already implied by running) as he opposed to "He *ran* on the freeway" (not odd because here a special place on land is being specified).

#### Meaning Relations

Sentence meaning involves more than the combined meanings of the individual morphemes and words in a sentence. Suppose we want to account for the meaning of "The man watered the roses". After a little thought we see that

the meaning of this sentence is just a sum of the lexical features for "men", "water", and "rose", plus features for the grammatical morphemes "the", PLURAL, and PAST (meaning is derived from combination of both lexical features and grammatical features). For we also understand that here the man is the doer of the action, and that the roses are the recipients of the action. We can contrast "The roses pricked the man", where the man is the recipient of the action and roses, or rather their thorns, are the originators of it. These are meaning relationships that hold over and above the individual meanings of words and morphemes in the sentence.

### Role – Relations

Look at the following examples:

- They broke the icon with an axe.
- An axe broke the icon.
- The icon broke.

According to transformational grammar, sentences i, ii, iii represent three different phrase structure possibilities: (i) represents VP consisting of V + NP + PP, (ii) represents VP consisting of V + NP, and (iii) represents VP consisting of merely V. The criteria for lexical subcategorization further suggest that "break" is three verbs, each associated with a different VP structure, roughly

- break<sub>1</sub> [ + V<sub>1</sub> + \_\_\_ NP with NP ]
- break<sub>2</sub> [ + V<sub>1</sub> + \_\_\_ NP ]
- break<sub>3</sub> [ + V<sub>1</sub> + \_\_\_ ]

Such a description is adequate insofar as it indicates the possible structures in which "break" can occur. But it does not express any relationship among the three "breaks", and thus cannot explain the fact that the class of N's that can be objects of "with" in the case of "break<sub>1</sub>" are the only ones that can be subjects of "break<sub>2</sub>", while the objects of "break<sub>1</sub>" and "break<sub>2</sub>" are the only ones that can be subjects of "break<sub>3</sub>". These facts suggest that the three "breaks" are very closely related indeed. If our grammar is to account for the relationships between sentences like, i, ii, iii, two different possibilities are open to us. One is to argue that syntactically there are indeed three separate verbs, "break<sub>1</sub>", "break<sub>2</sub>", and "break<sub>3</sub>", and that the similarities between them are to be accounted for in terms of identical semantic features and additional information stating the various semantic restrictions on NP's – for example, that objects of "break<sub>1</sub>", and "break<sub>2</sub>", must have the semantic feature [+ RIGID] (only rigid things can be broken, not flabby or soft things like cotton, wool, jelly etc.), and so forth. Furthermore, only those nouns that have the features [+RIGID] can be subjects of "break<sub>3</sub>". Another possibility involves the approach in which the base includes a verb and a set of associated NP's. These NP's are unordered in the base, but are assigned to particular surface positions by movement transformations according to their role with respect to the verb. For instance, in "they broke the icon with an axe", "they" has the role of Agent (doer of action), "axe" that of instrument (means of action), and "icon" that of Patient (object of action, thing present in the event).<sup>2</sup>

### Kinds of Semantics

There are not two kinds of semantics, one having to do with non-relational meanings, and the other having to do with relational meanings. Instead, there is basically one kind of semantics, which is relational.

### Synonymy/Homonymy

Homonymy is the same phenomenon as ambiguity, and synonymy is the same thing as paraphrase. Traditionally, the terms homonymy and synonymy have been used with reference to lexical items, while the terms ambiguity and paraphrase have been used with reference to sentential structures. For instance, "I hit the girl with the steak/stake" would in a traditional grammar be said to contain homonymy (steak/stake) and also ambiguity concerning the relation of the *with NP* phrase either to the subject (the 'I' used a steak or stake to hit the girl), or to the object ("the girl fled" and "The youth fled", which traditionally are called paraphrases because "young man" is a phrase but "youth" is not. However, "The thief fled" and "The robber fled" involve synonymy, not paraphrase, since both sentences involve words with the same meaning.

### Anomaly

Our knowledge tells us that "tall tower" and "long ribbon" are perfectly good combinations, while "long tower" and "tall ribbon" are somehow deviant. This kind of deviance is called "anomaly". We say in the grammar that "tall" combines only with inherently vertical nouns or with nouns that can be interpreted as vertical. Such constraints are called "selectional restrictions" because they govern the selection of lexical items for insertion into underlying structures. Anomaly provides the basis for one of the most versatile and widely used foregrounding devices, metaphor. For example, "The Earth..... shall dream a dream crept from the sunless pole".<sup>3</sup>

### Tautology

It is also a kind of violation of selectional restrictions. For example, "This dog is a dog", "This corpse is not alive". While contradiction and anomaly violate the organization of sense in a message, tautology seems rather to violate pragmatic (practical) rules requiring that utterances include information which is new and relevant. Tautologies provide no new information, they simply say  $x$  is  $x$ . Definitions are also in some sense tautologies.

## LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC DEVIATIONS

Language is symbolic. It involves signs, the entities which represent or stand for other entities. For example, the plus sign (+) stands for a certain mathematical operation. A black armband is a symbol of mourning. The signs are sequences of sounds, though these can be transferred into visual signs, as in writing. There is always certain relationship between an object (real or imaginary) and the sign which stands for it. Conventional relationship, which is learned or accepted as part of culture, like the relation between a black armband and mourning, is called a symbol. Such symbol works with conventional relation; there isn't any natural connection between the sound sequence and the object itself.

Lexicons (Lexical terms) have mostly literal meanings. For example,

You should carry a *torch* because the street is dark.

Here, the term 'torch' carries lexical or literal meaning, but it is not same in the following example,

"Let the words go forth to friends and foe alike, that the *torch* has gone to the new generations of Americans....."<sup>4</sup>

The "torch" is here "government" or "sovereignty", not a light. Therefore, lexicons have deviations in meanings in literature. Writer addresses to the readers with the emotive use of language. The message given by the writer has a context, which has the poetic or literary language with connotative meanings. Connotative meanings are deviations of denotative meanings. Denotation is literal or lexical meaning whereas connotation is individual realization of textual meaning. "Home" denotes the place where one lives with one's family, but it usually connotes comfort, intimacy, privacy and others.

This is the reason that poetry differs from ordinary language in that it activates the secondary or collateral meanings of a word simultaneously, a strategy which would disrupt ordinary communication.

Literal or lexical meanings are surface meanings of a text. These are well-defined meanings. Literary or figurative meanings are suggested meanings – quite flexible meanings – that we realize in context, that is also called deep meanings of a text. For example, Virginia Woolf writes the aspect of pleasure in an essay in the following words:

*It should lay us under a spell with its first word, and we should only wake, refreshed, with its last. In the interval we may pass through the most various experiences of amusement, surprise, interest, indignation; we may soar to the heights of fantasy with Lamb or plunge to the depths of wisdom with Bacon, but we must never be roused. The essay must lap us about and draw its curtain across the world.* <sup>5</sup>

On the surface of this text, Woolf emphasizes on the significant aspect of pleasure in an essay. She says that it temporarily removes us from the world of everyday affairs by immersing us in the world of the imagination. The world of imagination has been implied from the clause – "draw its (essay's) curtain across the world", which is certainly the deep meaning. Metalingual terms such as metaphor, allegory, simile, symbol, images etc. are jewels of literature. Literary meaning is far beyond the literal meaning of a text. Look at this piece of dialogue from Ibsen's "A Doll's House":<sup>6</sup>

*Helmer: But, Nora darling, you're dancing as if your life depended on it.*

*Nora: It does.....*

Helmer speaks with the sense of hypothesis, but Nora replies with the sense of reality. Helmer takes it only with the surface meaning that she really needs training of the dancing for the forthcoming program, but Nora and we readers take it with figurative meanings – this training as a means of providing her time for the task to be completed by Mrs. Linde and postponing her suicide.

Grammatical distortion or deviation is also remarkable side of literature. Grammar does not work completely in literature. It is said that, if there isn't such distortion or deviation, the literary text will not be pleasant after all. Literariness is the object of literary studies. The subject of literary science is not literature, but literariness, i.e. that which makes a given work a literary work. For the literariness autonomism and defamiliarization both are equally important. Any kind of strictness, rule, or pattern, or convention of grammar may destroy the sense of literariness.

Words, phrases, and even clauses are shifted at the writer's wish and need. For example, words can be fronted –

*Relaxation* you call it. [You call it *relaxation*.]

*Rich* he may be. [He may be *rich*.]

Grammatical

Here's a subject-verb inversion –

*Away went the car like a whirlwind.*

[The car went away like a whirlwind.]

Now we have subject-operator inversion –

*Not a word did he say.* [He didn't say a word.]

Shakespeare writes the clause in the mid –

My mistress *when she walks*, treads on the ground

Rhetoric effect can be realized in the following rhetoric question which is not a question, but an assertion –

Alas, alas, who's injured by my love? <sup>7</sup>

Donne says that no one is, in fact, injured by his love.

## PHONOLOGICAL AND GRAPHOLOGICAL FEATURES AND DEVIATIONS

Linguistic deviation is pleasant aspect of a literary work. Phonological and graphological deviations are also significant for literary criticism. Such deviations have been described briefly below.

### Phonological Deviations

General supra segmental rules of phonemes, stress, intonation etc. are not strictly applied in literature. In metrical patterns, succeeding lines have stressed or unstressed words similar to the first line. Stress is put even on unstressed syllables and stress is removed even from stressed syllables: In the following lines, 'up', 'and', 'at' have been stressed which are usually unstressed in daily speech, whereas 'right' has been unstressed which needs stress in daily speech.

υ \_υ\_ υ\_υ\_

O up and spake an elder knight,

υ\_υ\_ υ\_

sat at the king's right knee. <sup>8</sup>

In this aspect, we can see the deviation in Hopkins' poetry, in his "Sprung rhythm". The pattern of sprung rhythm is based on the number of accented syllables in each line. The number of unaccented syllables varies. The following nursery rhyme contains this pattern:

Table 1

—	—	—
One, /	two	
—U	U	—
Buckle	my	shoe

To lengthen the vowel, and in turn, the number of syllables, Blake writes "tyger" instead of "tiger", and pronounces "fi-re" instead of "fire".

### Graphological Deviation

Ellipsis is the omission of one or more words that, while essential to the grammatical structure of the sentence, are easily supplied by the reader. The effect of ellipsis is emphasis of statement. In the following quotation, the brackets indicate ellipsis:

Where wigs [strive] with wigs, [where] with sword-knots sword - knots strive,

[Where] Beaus banish beaus, and [where] coaches drive. <sup>9</sup>

Most often to reduce the number of syllables, a writer uses mark of appostrophe and deletes letters required, for example,

One prospect lost, another still we gain;

And not a vanity is giv'n in vain.<sup>10</sup>

E.E. Cummings is wonderful in his graphological technique. His poetry has a game of letters. For example, the "falling leaf"<sup>11</sup> poem has only four words. The form has the narrowness of a needle.

l (a le af fa ll s) one liness

Each of the first four lines has but one consonant and one vowel: two *l*'s, three *a*'s, one *e*, and two *f*'s. This suggests the fluttering pattern of a falling leaf. The next line, treated as a stanza, is a double *l*, extending meaning as the reader waits for the necessary completion. The poem ends on a shifting note which accentuates the impact of "alone", "one", and "oneliness" (defined as "own").

## CONCLUSIONS

Writers and readers both parties absorbed in literature with play of words and sounds. Lexical / semantic and grammatical features, lexical and semantic deviations, phonological and graphological features and deviations work beautifully in literary works.

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